

[Ben Stimmel]

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[Carrizozo?], N. Mex.

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PIONEER STORY [Ben Stimmel]

I was born in Ohio, September 25, 1857. I left Ohio in 1877 and went to Kansas City Missouri. In 1881 a young fellow by the name of Wesley Lewis and I came by train to Las Vegas, New Mexico to work on the Santa Fe Railroad. On our way out to Las Vegas we heard of the rich gold strike at White Oaks, New Mexico and instead of going to work for the railroad we decided to go to the gold fields. We started out to walk to White Oaks and walked for two days and a half witho'ut food or water. On the morning of the third day we overtook a oxen train hauling freight to Fort Stanton, New Mexico. They gave us food and water and a ride to Jerry [Hoecradle's?] place at Pines Wells, New Mexico, in the Gallinas Mountains. He gave us directions how to get to White Oaks so we started out again on foot. I do not remember how long it took us to get to White Oaks but it was pouring rain when we got there. We came to a house made of pickets and mud. We went inside and found it was a small store run by Robinson, Bogard and Dick Young. We bought something to eat and while eating our lunch in the store Mr. Bogard asked us if we were rock masons. Wesley Lewis spoke up and said he was. Mr. Bogard told us that he had a job for us at three dollars a day and our board if we could qualify. We went to work on a building which was to be a hotel and assay office, the first to be built in White Oaks. This was in the year 1881 and this building still stands in White Oaks today. It is built of rocks.

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After finishing that job I went to work as a miner in the Little Mack gold mine and later became foreman of the mine. I married Miss Anne Mackel in January, 1886. We lived in White Oaks until September 1889, when we set out in a covered wagon drawn by four horses, to go to Oklahoma to buy a farm. We had two children and two hound pups. I found a place I liked in Hennessy, Oklahoma, where we built up a real nice farm and lived for twenty five years.

On April 20, 1912, a cyclone hit our farm. It took the roof off of our house, and destroyed our barn and all out buildings. We had a hundred Indian Runner ducks and after the storm we found them about half a mile from the house in a mud swamp, all dead. The family saw the cyclone coming and all got in the storm cellar. After the storm I salvaged what I could from the farm and left Oklahoma for Lincoln County, New Mexico, where they don't have cyclones. I have lived here ever since.

NARRATOR: Ben L. Stimmel, Aged 81 years, Carrizozo, New Mexico.